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A Brief review of medicinal properties of *Vacha* (*Acorus calamus* Linn.) from *Nighantus*

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ABSTRACT

Herbs and herbal drugs have created interest among the people by the clinical proven effect like anti-inflammatory, analgesic, antipyretic, immunomodulations and adaptogenic. Also the overuse of synthetic drug, which results in higher incidence of adverse drug reaction, has motivated humans to return to nature for safer remedies. In this review we have taken *Vacha* (*Acorus calamus* Linn.) The present work aims to discuss *Vacha* in various *Nighantus* as manuscripts or just as evidence - in a chronological order. It is important herbal drug in various aspect like, *Acorus calamus* Linn. has also been used successfully by some Ayurvedic practitioners for *Krimi*, *Sthaulya*, *Vibandha*, *Unmada*, *Apasmara* etc.

Key words: Herb, *Vacha*, *Acorus calamus* Linn., *Nighantus*.

INTRODUCTION

Herbal medicine, sometimes referred to as herbalism or Botanical medicine, is the use of herbs for their therapeutic or medicinal value. An herb is a plant or plant part valued for its medicinal, aromatic or savory qualities. Herb plants produce and contain a variety of chemical substance that act upon the body. It was the period of *Nighantus* the botanical description of the medicinal herbs came into description. It was *Nighantukara's* who gave the Ayurvedic concept of botany including its classification. At a glance the classification seems to be based hit her of the modern classification. But it far too surpasses in the superiority and scientific platform. It is based on the

identical *Karma's* of plants. It differs in respect to the modern taxonomy which is totally on basis of anatomical morphology of the plant.

Acorus calamus Linn. belongs to Araceae family. *Acorus calamus* Linn, is Semi-aquatic herb. The rhizome is reddish brown, the lower surface having hairy roots which is like the hairs of cow's tail. It is having strong smell with many nodes. It improves the capacity to speak clearly and it reduces the body weight. It relieves colic pain and a reputed drug for epilepsy.^[1]

Earlier *Nighantus* were limited to explain the synonyms only. After some time the description of properties, action and indications are also included in the *Nighantu* along with synonyms. The *Nighantu* literature is one of the important aspects in the study of Ayurveda and especially in the subject of Dravyaguna Vijnana. The *Nighantu* literature is also as ancient as Ayurveda. Much importance has not been given to the study of *Nighantu*. The ancient *Nighantus* were actually like *Kosa*, containing the synonyms of *Dravya*. Later on, the drugs were given the description of properties, actions and their uses. In true sense the *Nighantu* means collection of words, synonyms and the names of the medicinal substances. The *Nighantu* may be defined as a glossary containing synonymous

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groups, the names of the drugs, plants, animals, minerals or anything that is administered either as food or medicine to the human body. *Vacha* (*Acorus calamus* Linn) is explained in almost all the important *Nighantus* with a variety of synonyms and *Guna Karmas*.

Dhanvantari Nighantu (10th - 13th Cent. A.D.)

In the beginning of *Nighantu*, author prays homage to lord Dhanvantari and again he mentions its name as *Dravyavali*. At the end of *Dravyavali* author desires to describe the drugs of *Dravyavali* with their synonyms and after that he has described their properties and actions along with synonyms. In this *Nighantu*, *Vacha* has been described under *Satpuspadi Varga*. Following synonyms are mentioned here i.e. *Dirghapatra*, *Golomi*, *Jatila*, *Lomasa*, *Sadgrantha*. *Vacha* has properties like *Kanthya*, *Medhya*. It is useful to treat various disorders like *Adhamana*, *Krimi*, *Sula*, *Vibandha*.^[2]

Madanpala Nighantu (14th Cent. A.D.)

Vacha has been mentioned in *Sunthyadi Varga*. *Madanpala* has included following synonyms of *Vacha* – *Golomi*, *Jatila*, *Sadagrantha* etc. and it is having *Kaphavataghna* property so, it is useful in the treatment of *Apasmara*, *Unmada*, *Sula* etc.^[3]

Kaiyadeva Nighantu (Pathyapathya Vibodhaka) (15th Cent. A.D.)

In this *Nighantu*, *Vacha* is described under *Aushadhi Varga* with following synonyms i.e. *Jatila*, *Karsini*, *Lomasa*, *Sadgrantha*, *Satparva*. Regarding its properties it has been said as *Ushna* in *Virya*, *Tikta* and *Katu Rasa*, here *Vacha* has been mentioned for various disorders like *Apasmara*, *Unmada*, *Krimi*, *Sthaulya*.^[4]

Bhavaprakasa Nighantu (16th Cent. A.D.)

This book is written by Bhavamisra who is an important landmark in the history of Indian Medicine. He stands at the junction of the medieval and modern period which is the turning point for its future course and also because of the fact that he revived, the style of *Samhitas* and contributed a good deal to various

aspects of Ayurveda by adding new ideas and drugs. *Vacha* has been mentioned in *Haritakyadi Varga* and following synonyms are found in this *Nighantu* – *Golomi*, *Jatila*, *Karsini*, *Mangalya*, *Lomasa* etc. and is included under 99 different *Yoga*. It is useful in the treatment of *Apasmara*, *Unmada*, *Sula*, *Vibandha* etc.^[5]

Raja Nighantu (Abhidhana Chudamani) (17th Cent. A.D.)

This book is written by Narhari Pandit, who has given first place to *Dravyaguna* in *Astanga Ayurveda*. This book is particularly based on *Dhanvantari Nighantu*. The subject matter has been divided into 23 chapters. *Vacha* is included in *Pippalyadi Varga*. Synonyms of *Vacha* mentioned in *Raja Nighantu* is *Bhardra*, *Dirghaparta*, *Golomi*, *Uragandha*, *Ugra* etc. It is having properties like *Deepana*, *Jantughna*, *Pachana*, *Medhya* etc.^[6]

Nighantu Adarsa (20th Cent. A.D.)

The book was published in Gujarat, its author is Vaidya Bapalalji who is the authoritative person of 20th century for identification of Ayurvedic plants. He has undertaken a separate *Vachadi Varga* of its description.^[7]

Priya Nighantu (20th Cent. A.D.)

Acharya Priyavata Sharma in his book *Priya Nighantu* has described *Vacha* in *Satpuspadi Varga*.^[8]

DISCUSSION

In rural India, 70 percent of the population is dependent on the traditional system of medicine, it is essential to intensify the study of medicinal plants. History of drug can be studied under *Vaidic Kala*, *Upanishad Kala*, *Purana Kala*, *Samhita Kala*, *Nighantu Kala* and *Adhunik Kala*. *Acorus calamus* Linn. is a popular, which is used by traditional practitioner to cure various ailments. Present study revealed that by the help of literature i.e., *Kosha* and *Nighantus* we will reach to medicine very easily and take the benefit by the traditional medicines. The *Nighantus* generally were coined using a therapeutic text. Authors used the prevailing and popular texts of their time and

region as basis to write *Nighantus*. This explains the emergence of more than one *Nighantu* during one period. Further, two different *Nighantus* are seen having groups with same name but have kept different substances under them. This has happened due to the different rationale used in grouping of the substances. This offers a tremendous scope for research in order to explore the therapeutic application of a substance in different regions and era, in the same manner *Vacha* was also a popular drug at that time. It has tremendous effect on different diseases viz. *Sthaulya*, *Krimi*, *Apasmara*, *Unmada* etc.

CONCLUSION

The present review on *Vacha* of different *Nighantus* can be useful to know about the different formulations of *Vacha* in which different parts of this plant is used. By this way we can use *Vacha* in the treatment of different diseases. Most of the *Nighantus* have mentioned *Vacha* is a good *Krimighna*, *Jantughna*, *Medhya* drug. A detailed clinical study is required to understand the mode of action of this drugs and their efficacy.

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